DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 808 FL 017 997

AUTHOR Hurshberger, Lisa
TITLE Communication Anxiety and Its Effect on Oral Proficiency.
PUB DATE Feb 89
NOTE 64p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Second Language Research Forum (Los Angeles, CA, February 23-28, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Measures; *Communication Apprehension; Educational Environment; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Language Proficiency; Negative Attitudes; Questionnaires; Second Language Learning; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Yugoslavia

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the bipolar tension/relaxation factors that affect a second language learner's oral proficiency. While the traditional assumption in the field of second language acquisition is that negative attitudes toward communicative interaction naturally predicate low proficiency, the data gathered from 50 subjects studying English as a Second Language (ESL) in Mostar, Yugoslavia, indicated that an interactive relationship exists between attitudes toward the language learning environment and oral proficiency. Low proficiency learners were not uniformly negative toward communicative interaction, and although positive attitudes became more prevalent with higher levels of English proficiency, there was no consistent attitude shift that could be identified as a producer of greater linguistic proficiency. The questionnaires used to elicit attitudes toward language learning are appended. (DJD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED307808

Communication Anxiety and Its Effect on Oral Proficiency

Lisa Hurshberger

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Second Language Research Forum (Los Angeles, CA, February 23-28 1989).

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Hurshberger, L

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL017997

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

It has long been a tenet among second language researchers that attitudinal variation among learners of similar backgrounds is responsible for a large proportion of the variability in those learners' ultimate language proficiency. Spolsky (1988) provides a fairly representative model of how attitudes are perceived as fitting into the language learning process. The learner is seen as approaching the learning environment with a set of attitudinal and personality variables that predetermines how much linguistic and contextual input from the learning environment he or she will be able to process. While this type of model does appear to have enough predictive power to generate possible explanations for why one classroom of language learners makes adequate progress and the other does not, it also carries with it an implication.

The implication is that if a learner enters the language learning environment with a negative attitude towards that environment, he or she will necessarily acquire less overall proficiency in the target language than a similar learner with a positive attitude. Spolsky points to the research of Gardner (1979, 1985) and Gardner, Lalonde and Pierson (1983) as supporting this perspective. However, there is equally conclusive evidence (Backmann, 1977; Oller, Hudson, and Liu, 1977; Oller, Perkins, and Murakami, 1980) against such a direct link between learner attitude and proficiency in a target language.

These contradictory sets of findings, in which attitudinal clusters towards the target language and culture, and the

learning environment itself were found for one group of learners to correlate significantly with proficiency and to have no correlation with another groups' linguistic performance, often leads researchers to investigate target populations, sociolinguistic variables, and many other external factors related to attitude, while ignoring one significant element of their investigation--the attitudinal study itself.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), in their discussion of the lack of predictive power of many attitudinal surveys, have posited that the survey writer needs to be particularly careful when formulating the potential causal links between a subject's hypothetical attitude and his or her resultant behavior. They argue that only when an attitude and a behavior are identical in

their target, context, and timing will surveys testing the presence or absence of that particular attitude enable the researcher to predict the test subjects' probable behavior. It is for this reason, I believe, that surveys ostensibly designed to test learner attitude towards a learning environment (such as the one outlined in Gardner, 1985) that primarily question the learner about his or her attitude towards the target culture and language have strong predictive power for some populations but not others. A more direct approach that clearly links a set of attitudes towards the learning environment with learner behavior may result in a language learning model with greater predictive power.

One perspective into the effect of learner attitude upon proficiency that might provide a more appropriate research model can be found in Foss and Reitzel's (1988) discussion of communication anxiety among second language learners. In their framework, language learners enter the classroom with varying levels of motivation, receive both knowledge and skills training in the classroom, and evaluate both the outcome and the context of any second language interaction they may have while engaged in the language learning process. While this model may not appear distinctive from previous models of second language acquisition, the component it contains that makes it distinctive is that the evaluative process is done through the learners' own perceptions of linguistic success or failure. Foss and Reitzel see this as

normally producing a certain amount of communicative anxiety within the learners, which may prevent them from accurately assessing their own linguistic output because they may perceive that output as inappropriate, inadequate, or incompetent, regardless of teacher feedback. This, they argue, blocks further learning because learners may regard their own performance so negatively that they do not trust their own capacity to eventually attain fluency or even to acquire new linguistic structures. Clearly, Foss and Reitzel see a direct relationship between a learner's perceptions of his performance and his or her ultimate linguistic outcomes.

The purpose of this research, therefore, was to evaluate whether such a direct relationship could be posited between one

element in the learner's overall attitudinal framework and one aspect of second language proficiency, oral production. The element to be tested was communication apprehension, or "a person's level of fear or anxiety associated with any form of communication with other people" (as defined by McCroskey, 1982, p. 139) within the context of speaking a second language. Communication apprehension is a construct isolated by McCroskey and others in their research into attitudinal barriers towards public speaking experienced by subjects performing in their native language. High communicative apprehensives are seen as experiencing debilitating apprehension in many public communication situations when it is required for them to communicate. Foss and Reitzel had posited that high

communication apprehension towards communicating in a second language may both block communication initiative in the second language and hamper further production.

SUBJECTS:

Fifty undergraduate students in the Department of Economics at the University of Mostar, Mostar, Yugoslavia were selected as subjects for this experiment. The Republic of Bosnia-Hezegovina requires two years of a foreign language for all economics majors, so these students were fulfilling the language requirement for their degree by enrolling in an English course. 78% of the subjects were in the first year course of English for economists, and 22% were in the second year course. 74% of the subjects were female, and 26% were male.

PROCEDURES

The subjects were first administered two written attitudinal surveys in their English classes: the short form of the PRCA

(Personal Report of Communication Apprehension; McCroskey, 1977) and an ESL variant designed to obtain similar information about the subjects' communication apprehension when speaking English in a variety of contexts, including the language classroom. Both surveys were translated into Serbo-Croatian by an accredited translator and administered in Serbo-Croatian by that same translator (who was also the students' English teacher). The subjects were also requested to complete a simple cover page (also written in Serbo-Croatian) giving their name, age, years studied, and if they were studying English as a course requirement or for their major.

The subjects were then asked to participate in a short interview session with a native speaker of English where they would be required to answer a few questions about why they were

studying English and complete another survey. Each subject spent approximately 5 minutes with the interviewer and answered the same five or six basic questions designed to more specifically investigate their language background and motivation for learning English. The interviewer ranked the subjects on the FSI oral interview scale during the interview. They then completed a third attitudinal survey designed to indicate their state communicative apprehension. This survey was quite similar to the state communication apprehension survey devised by Richmond (1979) to test subjects' level of communication apprehension immediately after a stress-producing communicative experience, and was translated into Serbo-Croatian so that subjects could describe more accurately the emotional state the interview had produced within them.

Percentages for each response, and statistical means and standard deviations were calculated for each question asked the subjects. Correlations and factor analyses were then run between all three attitudinal surveys using the SPSS-X statistical package. Correlations were also run between the subjects' oral proficiency as established by the interview and the attitudinal surveys. All claims of statistical significance were at the Pearson .05 level.

RESULTS

Sociometrically, these subjects had some predicted similarities. All of the subjects were from within a 100-mile radius of Mostar, so they were all Yugoslavs and their native language was either the Herzegovinan variant of Serbo-Croatian or Croatian. (One subject had been born in Canada and one in

Germany. Both had to learn Serbo-Croatian when they moved back to Yugoslavia, but these subjects were clear exceptions to the norm.) As all subjects were economics majors, they had completed secondary school and its language requirement for a high school diploma, which would certify them as fluent in some second language, although because of the technical diversification of the secondary school system in Yugoslavia, the precise nature of these requirements varied widely. 74% of the subjects claimed that they were studying English because of their own personal interest in the language, and not because the university required them to do so in order to obtain a degree in economics.

Despite their uniformity of background, there were some clear distinctions among subjects. The widest range of distinctions was in terms of secondary school background. A

total of fourteen different specializations were indicated during interviews, ranging from horticulture to computer programming. 46% of the subjects had studied English for nine years, including the current year, but some had only studied English for six or seven years before enrolling in this course. Perhaps the most interesting distinction among the subjects was the range of oral proficiency in English. 34% of the subjects ranked into the 0+ category of oral proficiency, 26% into the 1-1+ range, and 26% into the 2-2+ range. (14% of the subjects did not attend the interview, so could not be evaluated.)

The simplest explanation for why, after over five years of English training at the secondary and university level, these students were at such a low level of oral proficiency is that the average student does not readily enter into opportunities to

speak English outside of the classroom. 56% of the students didn't speak English outside of the class, and only 62% listened to English (on television or radio) outside of class.

As the PRCA has been tested on a wide variety of populations and found to be valid, and is considered a diagnostic test for communication apprehension within a given population, it was assumed that this population's response to the PRCA would merely indicate that a minority of test subjects experienced communication apprehension when speaking their native language. The only point of interest in terms of this population's response to the PRCA was how widely or narrowly the standard deviation for particular questions ranged (Table 1). Responses to Question 3, I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public, had a mean of 2.633 and a narrow SD (.883), indicating that a large number

of subjects do not eagerly anticipate a public speaking experience. Responses to Question 6, which asks the subjects to claim greater fluency of speech in their own language for themselves than for others, also have a narrow SD (.879) and a mean of 2.755, indicating that a large number of subjects disagree with the statement. However, these subjects, overall, do not consider oral communication in and of itself debilitating. 82% of all subjects disagreed or strongly disagreed with Question 9, I am afraid to speak up in conversations, and their responses had a relatively narrow range (.823 SD).

The two questions that produced the widest range of responses were Question 7, I like to get involved in group discussion, and question 8, I dislike using my body and voice expressively. Responses to Question 7 had a mean of 3.688,

indicating a slight preference for disagreement, but an SD of 1.250. Responses to Question 8 also had an SD of 1.250, indicating that subjects varied in their preference towards using their body and voice expressively. In addition, responses to Question 8 fell into a bimodal curve, indicating a split in responses more likely to be based on personality than on situational pressure.

In contrast, the PRCA/ESL survey, while resembling a diagnostic evaluation similar to that of the PRCA, was, rather, intended to both isolate specific elements of communication anxiety and provide information that could be correlated to subjects' communication anxiety and their oral proficiency. It was originally assumed that responses to the PRCA/ESL survey would pattern themselves after responses to the PRCA survey,

since Foss and Reitzel had claimed that communication anxiety experienced when speaking a second language was analogous to communication anxiety experienced in all communicative situations, albeit with some situational intensification because of the difficulties inherent in communicating in a second language (which would manifest itself as a normal curve, skewed in the direction of greater negativity towards the communicative situation). This, however, appeared not to be the case (Table 2).

The only questions in the ESL/PRCA survey that produced any responses resembling a normal curve were Question 1, I dislike talking in English with groups of people, Question 4, I like to get involved in group discussions in English, and Question 17, I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.

These questions can be grouped into two categories of response--liking or disliking group discussions in English, and one's sense of relaxation when speaking in English class. It might be predicted that responses to the first set of questions would be evenly distributed because subjects almost never experience such a situation; Yugoslav students from Herzegovina who are not majoring in English are highly unlikely to use the language in group discussion, and, therefore, will not be able to describe their attitude towards a situation that they have not experienced. But they have used English in the classroom setting and do appear to respond across a range to questions concerning this interactive experience.

Responses to many questions distributed themselves bimodally. Question 2: Generally, I am comfortable while

talking in English with groups of people, Question 3: I am tense and nervous while talking with people in English, Question 5: Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous, Question 6: I am calm and relaxed while talking with groups of people in English, Question 13: I have no fear of speaking in English class, and Question 18: While speaking English in class, I get so nervous, I forget facts I really know all concern stress levels, and it might be predicted that subjects would not be neutral concerning experiences that they do have on occasion, but would respond to the question based on previous interactions.

The rest of the questions tended to show a skewed distribution. Question 7: When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous, Question 8: I have no fear of speaking in English, Question 9: Ordinarily, I am very tense and

nervous when speaking English, Question 10: Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English, Question 11: When speaking English with a stranger, I feel very relaxed, and Question 12: I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English all relate to emotional states experienced while speaking English and many contain the adverb very. This appeared to make the questions excessively strong for most subjects, and they tended to disavow any overtly strong reaction, either for or against, to speaking English. Responses to Question 8, in particular, indicated a slight majority in disagreement with the statement, which was not the expected result.

The subjects' response to the state test of communicative anxiety in terms of percentages and distributions corresponded to neither the responses to the PRCA nor the PRCA/ESL (Table 3).

While the majority of the responses distributed themselves along some form of a normal curve, many of those normal curves appeared to be skewed, and not in the direction predicted. Subjects tended to agree with the positive adjectives as descriptors of the interview, and disagree with the negative adjectives.

Particular adjectives were either strongly supported or rejected by the subjects as descriptors of their state during the interview. Subjects supported friendly atmosphere (78%) relaxed (60%), cheerful (54%), and entertaining (60%), but rejected angry (60% not at all angry), nervous (58%), tired (76%), uneasy (72%), sweating and shaking (70%), and horrified (80%) as appropriate descriptors of their experience.

In summary, each survey appeared to be testing a slightly different set of responses, which would naturally follow, as the

topic, context, and administration set-up of each survey were slightly different. It was assumed initially, however, that some correlations could be drawn among each set of responses, as each survey was designed to test some form of communicative anxiety. Pearson product-moment correlations, with significance set at .05, indicated that there was a relationship between the attitudes surveyed in the PRCA/ESL survey and the state survey, but that the attitudes surveyed in the PRCA survey did not correspond in any significant way to the attitudes surveyed in either of the other two surveys.

However, a large number of significant correlations did appear between the PRCA/ESL survey and the state survey (Table 4). In order to analyze their implications, it was necessary to separate the PRCA/ESL survey questions into contextual

categories. Questions 1 through 4 and Question 6 were intended to analyze communication apprehension experienced when subjects spoke in English in groups, Questions 5, 7, and 11 investigated attitudes of subjects when speaking English to strangers, Questions 8 through 10 and 12 investigated general attitudes towards speaking English, and Questions 13 through 18 investigated attitudes towards the experience of speaking English in the classroom.

Questions concerning the context of speaking English in the classroom correlated most frequently with state questions, particularly relaxed, frightened, uncertain, and entertained. It is important to note, however, that positive state adjectives, such as relaxed, did not correlate positively with positive PRCA/ESL questions, such as I have no fear of speaking in English

class, and negative state adjectives, such as frightened, did not correlate postively with negative PRCA/ESL questions, such as While speaking English in class, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know. It appeared that certain stimulus adjectives, particularly relaxed, frightened, calm, entertained, and tense, correlated strongly, both positively and negatively, with certain questions, particularly those investigating the classroom context, and Questions 1, 3, 6, and 7 (I dislike talking in English with groups of people, I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English, I am calm and relaxed when talking with groups of people in English, and When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.).

Another point of interest was PRCA/ESL question 8, I have no fear of speaking English. This statement correlated

positively with the adjectives tired, frightened, uneasy, embarrassed, awkward, uncertain, entertained, and tense, and negatively with the adjectives relaxed, energetic, sweating and shaking, and uncertain. It also produced the largest number of correlations of any question. As 48% of the subjects either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and only 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed with it, it evidently tapped into a state of emotional arousal related to that indicated by the selection of either positive or negative adjectives. Most likely the claim of having no fear of speaking English produced the same kind of response that any statement with the adjective very produced. Care must be taken, however, before claiming a direct correspondence in meaning between the English translation and the Serbo-Croatian original that the subjects were tested with.

While the translation itself is accurate, the words strah and fear may have different connotations, and it may be easier to claim to have no strah in a situation than it is to claim to have no fear of it!

Finally, in order to analyze these correlations, and to determine what significant variables were interacting in the lack of correlation between the PRCA and other surveys, it was necessary to do a factor analysis of all three surveys. Eigenvalues were determined to be significant if they were greater than one, and factor analyses were done of each survey in relationship to the other two. Eight factors were isolated in the analysis of PRCA/PRCA/ESL correlations (Table 5), nine factors in the analysis of PRCA/state correlations (Table 6), and nine factors in the study of PRCA/ESL/state correlations (Table

7).

The most significant factor among the correlations between the PRCA and the PRCA/ESL was a bipolar tension/relaxation response to questions dealing with both speaking English in general and speaking English in class (Questions 3, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, and 17 in the PRCA/ESL survey). This factor accounted for 30% of the variance in subject response. Subjects appeared not to differentiate between statements that described their reaction to English or English class as calm or tense, but rather clustered their reactions around the notion of being both tense and calm in an English-speaking environment.

The second most significant factor was isolated in Questions 5 and 7 of the PRCA/ESL, a negative response towards speaking English to strangers (accounting for 14% of the variance). The

third factor was isolated by PRCA Question 9, I am afraid to speak up in conversations. This shyness factor accounted for 9% of the variance.

The other five factors could be isolated with one survey question in either the PRCA or the PRCA/ESL. Factor 4, low communication apprehension in a public speaking environment, was isolated by PRCA Question 3. PRCA Question 6, testing for low communication apprehension in general, isolated Factor 5. Factor 6, high communication apprehension in groups, was isolated by PRCA Question 2. Factor 7, high communication apprehension when speaking English in groups, was isolated by PRCA/ESL Question 12. And Factor 8, high communication apprehension in self-expressive contexts was isolated by PRCA Question 8.

The factor analysis of the relationship between the PRCA and

the state survey indicated even more strongly that very little of the PRCA survey directly predicted communicative anxiety towards speaking English. The first factor isolated in this procedure was, once again, a bipolar indicator of both tension and relaxation. The adjectives relaxed, nervous, frightened, embarassed, calm, and tense from the state survey all fell into a relationship which accounted for 38% of the variance in response. The second factor, physicsal discomfort when speaking English, was, more predictably, isolated by the adjectives tired and uneasy, which accounted for 13% of the variance. The third factor, the social isolate indicator, contained a slight bipolar element, with PRCA survey Questions 2 and 6 accounting for 7% of the variance. The fourth factor was isolated by two statements indicating low communication apprehension in group environments,

Questions 1 and 7 on the PRCA, accounting for 7% of the variance.

The remaining four factors all had Eigenvalues of less than 2. Factor 5, high negativity, was isolated by the adjectives angry and horrified. Factor 6, friendliness, was isolated by the noun phrase friendly atmosphere. Factor 7, certainty, was isolated by the adjective decisive and Factor 8, high communication apprehension in self-expressive contexts, was isolated by the PRCA Question 8.

The factor analysis of the relationship between the PRCA/ESL survey and the state survey also yielded some unexpected results. Perhaps the most notable indication that, despite the presence of correlations between individual questions, these surveys were not testing precisely the same response set, is that questions from each survey loaded into separate factors; there was no cross-

loading of responses to PRCA/ESL questions designed to test for the presence of tension and responses to adjectives such as tense and nervous. The first factor isolated, tension when interviewed, did contain both of these adjectives, as well as frightened, embarassed, and uncertain. It accounted for 39% of the variance.

The second factor, claimed tension/relaxation in the English-speaking context, accounting for 12% of the variance, contained four sentences (Questions 3, 9, 10, and 17 in the PRCA/ESL survey). The third factor, physical discomfort when interviewed, accounted for 7% of the variance. The fourth factor, self-confidence when interviewed, accounted for 6% of the variance. The fifth factor was isolated by two questions from the PRCA/ESL both having to do with discomfort when speaking

English with strangers (Questions 5 and 7). It accounted for 6% of the variance.

The remaining four factors had Eigenvalues of less than 2. Factor 6, high negativity when interviewed, accounted for 5% of the variance. Factor 7 was isolated by Questions 2 and 4 of the PRCA/ESL survey, both dealing with enjoyment of the experience of speaking English with groups of people. It accounted for 4% of the variance in the relationship. Factor 8, friendliness, was isolated by the noun phrase friendly atmosphere, and accounted for 4% of the variance. And Factor 9, relaxation when speaking with strangers in English, was isolated by Question 11 on the PRCA/ESL survey, and accounted for 3% of the variance.

In order to explain why means, the PRCA/ESL-state survey and the factor analyses repeatedly grouped themselves into bipolar

factors, subject response was analyzed based upon tested oral proficiency. 34% of the subjects tested into the 0-0+ category of oral proficiency, 26% into the 1-1+ category and 26% into the 2-2+ category, so it was apparent that there were 3 distinct proficiency groups. (As it was the middle of the semester, there was no other way to evaluate students' proficiency.) Given the predictions of Krashen and Terrell (1983); Gardner (1985); Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986); and Foss and Reitzel (1988), it was anticipated that these three proficiency groups could not be distinguished by the PRCA survey, as it solely evaluates communicative apprehension in the target language, but could be distinguished using the PRCA/ESL and state surveys, as they test attitudinal sets towards speaking English. This proved to be true at certain points, but not at others.

The PRCA survey (Table 8) did not indicate any overwhelming distinctions among members of the three proficiency groups, except in their responses to three questions: Question 2, I am afraid to express myself in a group; Question 4, Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform, and Question 8, I dislike to use my body and voice expressively. In all three instances, 0 proficiency subjects either were split positively and negatively in terms of response, or responded along a normal curve, while the majority of 2 proficiency subjects disagreed with these questions. While one would hesitate to claim that these three questions isolate a slight personality distinction that might determine why the 2 proficiency subjects were so fluent, it is interesting to note that all of these questions involve an individual making himself

or herself distinctive within a group context, and speaking a foreign language when one is clearly far from fluent in that language may produce the same sort of stress upon an individual. The results here appear to indicate that certain personality variables do come into play when a subject attempts to develop fluency in a language.

The PRCA/ESL, in contrast, clearly indicated that 0 proficiency subjects and 2 proficiency subjects can also be distinguished in terms of their attitude towards speaking English in a variety of contexts (Table 9). Out of a total of 18 questions, 4 questions produced a shift from negative responses to the situation by 0 proficiency subjects to positive responses by 2 proficiency subjects (Questions 6, 7, 12, and 16). 5 questions produced a shift from negative responses to the

situation by 0 proficiency subjects to either a bimodal split or a normal curve by 2 proficiency subjects (Questions 3, 10, 11, 15, and 17). And 5 questions produced a shift from either a bimodal split or a normal curve by 0 proficiency subjects to positive responsees to the situation by 2 proficiency subjects (Questions 8, 9, 13, 14, and 18). Clearly, the more proficient a subject was, the more positive his or her attitude was towards speaking English, regardless of context.

One would assume, given the relatively consistent response of subjects to the PRCA/ESL based on their proficiency, that subjects' responsees to the state survey, which has been seen to be testing similar variables to the PRCA/ESL, would be more negative for less proficient subjects, and more positive for more proficient subjects. This proved to be only partly the case

(Table 10). Subject responses did shift from negative to positive for three adjectives: decisive, energetic, and uncertain. And responses to other adjectives did appear to shift, although not as drastically. 0 proficiency subjects felt neutral about the adjectives relaxed, confident, happy, embarassed, cheerful, calm, and entertaining, while proficient subjects tended to feel more positive about these adjectives. However, proficiency of the subjects did not appear to determine how angry, frightened, horrified, sweating and shaking, or how much of a friendly atmosphere they experienced during the interview. In many cases, more proficient subjects simply were more emphatically less negative concerning certain adjectives. 2 proficency subjects felt even more emphatically not nervous, not tired, not uneasy, and not awkward.

The most significant aspect to note here is that subjects' responses to the PRCA/ESL appeared to indicate that, uniformly, 0 proficiency subjects would be either neutral or negative towards the oral interview, and 2 proficiency subjects would be either neutral or positive. While one could easily point to individual adjectives and claim that these indicated such an attitudinal shift, other adjectival descriptors of the oral interview could arguably indicate that 0 proficiency subjects did not feel negatively about the experience, and that 2 proficiency subjects simply felt more strongly that way. It is particularly significant to note that the adjectives that accounted for the majority of the variance in factor analyses of the data were adjectives that can not be used as indicators of the presence of some type of affective barrier or filter towards communication

in a target language, as a majority of subjects did not feel nervous, frightened, tense, embarassed, tired, uncertain, or uneasy during the interview. What is clear is that the actual experience of oral interaction in English does not uniformly produce a predicted level of communicative apprehension.

DISCUSSION

From an analysis of the data, it is apparent that subjects with little or no proficiency in a target language neither respond positively to questions concerning anticipated encounters in that language nor to the actual experience of interaction in that language. However, it cannot be claimed, given this data, that this subset of subjects responds negatively to either experience. This is an important distinction to make because it indicates that, while low-proficiency subjects are not as enthusiastic about interacting in the target language as their more proficient colleagues, the affective barriers and evaluations that are hypothesized to come into play whenever a low-proficiency subject is asked to consider interaction or

interact in the target language are not uniformly in place, regardless of learner or context, for this group of subjects.

This provides the researcher with a certain set of implications. It implies that there is an interactive relationship between linguistic proficiency and attitudinal variables, rather than a strictly linear, cause-and-effect relationship frequently posited in the literature (Spolsky, 1988). One could easily develop an alternative model closely related to that of Foss and Reitzel. As learners interact in the classroom and gain proficiency and control of target structures, their evaluation not only of themselves but of the language learning environment shifts from negativity or neutrality towards the situation to that of neutrality or positivity. Language

learners with low proficiency would naturally appear to have attitudinal barriers to the learning situation because of their awareness of how much is expected of them as opposed to how much they can actually produce. A linear model (such as Krashen and Terrell, 1983) that places much of the onus for low proficiency on the individual learner's attitude would logically equate that attitude with low proficiency. An interactive model, in contrast, would assume that the learner's evaluation of the learning environment would change over time as he or she gained control of more structures in more linguistic contexts. And the data appears to bear this out.

Evaluating student attitudes towards the target language when test subjects are studying the language as a

foreign rather than a native language does produce certain problems for the researcher. First of all, low proficiency subjects who have had limited contact with speakers of the target language may not be able to accurately assess their attitudes towards encounters such as those described by the PRCA/ESL if they have never had them. Secondly, it is often difficult to interpret precisely what is meant by agreement or disagreement with a test statement or adjective when the subject responds in one language and the response itself is evaluated in another. Both of these dilemmas, unique to this particular environment, may make it difficult to replicate these results in other contexts.

However, the possibility that there might be an alternative to the traditional causal model between affective variables and language proficiency bears looking into. We need to investigate attitudes and behavior of individual learners throughout the language learning process. It would be a relatively simple procedure, using the PRCA/ESL and/or the state test, to isolate groups of learners, at varying levels of proficiency, who consistently produce extremely positive or extremely negative responses to test items. These learners could then be continuously evaluated throughout the course of the language program to determine the relationship between attitudinal shift and linguistic improvement, or if, indeed, either of these two processes does take place within that context.

In conclusion, this investigation has isolated certain affective variables, in particular a bipolar tension/relaxation factor, that do appear to come into play when a learner considers or engages in interaction in a target language. The traditional assumption in the field of second language acquisition is that negative attitudes towards such interaction naturally predicate low proficiency. The data presented here indicates that an interactive relationship between these two elements has more explanatory power. Low proficiency learners are not uniformly negative towards the experience, and although positive attitudes do become more prevalent with greater proficiency, there is no consistent attitude shift that could be said to produce greater linguistic proficiency.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. and M. Fishbein. Attitude-Behavior Relations: A Theoretical Analysis and Review of Empirical Research. Psychological Bulletin, 1977, 84, 888-918.

Backmann, N. Two Measures of Affective Factors as They Relate to Progress in Adult Second-Language Learning. Working Papers in Bilingualism, 1976, 10, 100-22.

Foss, K. A. and A. C. Reitel. A Relational Model for Managing Second Language Anxiety. TESOL Quarterly, 1988, 22, 437-54.

Gardner, R. C. Social and Psychological Aspects of Second Language Acquisition. In H. Giles and R. St. Clair (Eds.), Language and Social Psychology. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977.

Gardner, R. C. Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation. London: Edward Arnold, 1985.

Gardner, R. C., Lalonde, R. N., and R. Pierson. The Socioeducational Model of Second Language Acquisition: An Investigation Using LISREL Causal Modeling. Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 1983, 2, 1-15.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B. and J. Cope. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. The Modern Language Journal, 1986, 70, 125-32.

Krashen, S. and T. Terrell. The Natural Approach: Language Acquistion in the Classroom. New York: Pergamon Press, 1985.

McCroskey, J. C. Validity of the PRCA as a Index of Oral Communication Apprehension. Communication Monographs, 1978, 43, 182-203.

McCroskey, J. C. Oral Communication Apprehension: A Reconceptualization. In M. Burgoon (ed.), Communication Yearbook 16. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982.

Oller, J. W., Hudson, A. J., and P. F. Liu. Attitudes and Attained Proficiency in ESL: A Sociolinguistic Study of Native Speakers of Chinese in the United States. Language Learning, 1977, 27, 1-27.

Oller, J. W., Perkins, K. and M. Murakami. Behavioral and Attitudinal Correlates of Progress in ESL. In J. W. Oller and K. Perkins (eds.), Research in Language Testing. Rowley: Newbury House, 1980.

Richmond, V. P. The Relationship Between Trait and State Communication Apprehension and Individual Perceptions During Acquaintance Stages. Human Communication Research, 1978, 4, 338-49.

Spolsky, B. Bridging the Gap: A General Theory of Second Language Learning. TESOL Quarterly, 1988, 22, 377-406.

Table 1

-Lisa Hershberger
SLRF '89

PRCA Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
1. I look forward to expressing myself in meetings.	14	32	26	24	2	3.327	1.068
2. I am afraid to express myself in a group.		16	30	36	16	3.531	.960
3. I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public.		16	40	32	10	2.633	.883
4. Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform.	4	14	28	40	12	3.429	1.021
5. I always avoid speaking in public.	8	16	30	36	8	3.204	1.086
6. I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most people are.	2	16	42	32	6	2.755	.879
7. I like to get involved in group discussion.	18	38	32	8		3.688	1.250
8. I dislike using my body and voice expressively.	14	24	14	38	18	3.020	1.250
9. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.		4	12	40	42	4.224	.823
10. I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local TV show.	4	8	50	24	12	2.673	.944

Table 2

PRCA/ESL Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
1. I dislike talking in English with groups of people.	2	22	46	28	2	3.06	.810
2. Generally, I am comfortable while talking in English with groups of people.	4	38	18	38	2	3.04	.999
3. I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English.	12	30	20	34	4	2.88	1.124
4. I like to get involved in group discussions in English.	6	24	40	28	2	3.04	.915
5. Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous.	8	36	22	26	8	2.9	1.118
6. I am calm and relaxed when talking with groups of people in English.		26	22	44	8	2.66	.950
7. When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.	8	22	24	30	16	3.24	1.1926
8. I have no fear of speaking in English.	6	42	38	12	2	3.30	.845
9. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous when speaking English.	6	26	26	38	4	3.08	1.016
10. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.	4	22	24	46	4	2.76	.9707
11. When speaking English with a stranger, I feel very relaxed.	2	22	30	38	8	2.72	.96
12. I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English.	8	24	30	30	8	3.06	1.064
13. I have no fear of speaking in English class.	10	34	26	28	2	3.24	1.080

PRCA/ESL Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
14. I feel physically uncomfortable when speaking in English class.	4	26	14	38	8	3.4	1.164
15. I feel relaxed when speaking in English class.	4	20	28	38	10	2.7	1.0246
16. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am speaking in English class.	8	24	24	34	10	3.14	1.315
17. I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.	2	16	46	22	14	2.7	.964
18. While speaking English in class, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	10	24	10	40	16	3.28	1.265

Table 3

State Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
1. Relaxed	26	34	18	8	14	2.093	.947
2. Angry	4			12	66	4.652	.911
3. Confident	8	28	36	10	2	2.643	.906
4. Nervous	4	10	10	38	20	3.732	1.119
5. Happy	6	30	38	8	2	2.643	.850
6. Tired			6	36	40	4.415	.631
7. Frightened	4	10	8	32	30	3.881	1.173
8. Uneasy		4	8	34	38	4.262	.828
9. Energetic	2	20	32	22	6	3.122	.954
10. Embarassed	4	8	18	30	20	3.675	1.118
11. Cheerful	10	44	22	8	2	2.395	.903
12. Decisive	4	22	32	20	4	2.976	.961
13. Awkward	2	10	10	36	24	3.854	1.062
14. Friendly Atmosphere	40	38	6		2	1.674	.908
15. Calm	18	34	24	10		2.302	.934
16. Entertained	30	30	24	2		1.977	.859
17. Sweating and Shaking			12	20	50	4.463	.745
18. Uncertain		14	18	28	24	3.736	1.061
19. Tense		18	14	28	24	3.690	1.115
20. Horrified			4	26	54	4.595	.557

Note: 16% of the subjects did not appear for the interview, so totals do not equal 100%.

Table 4

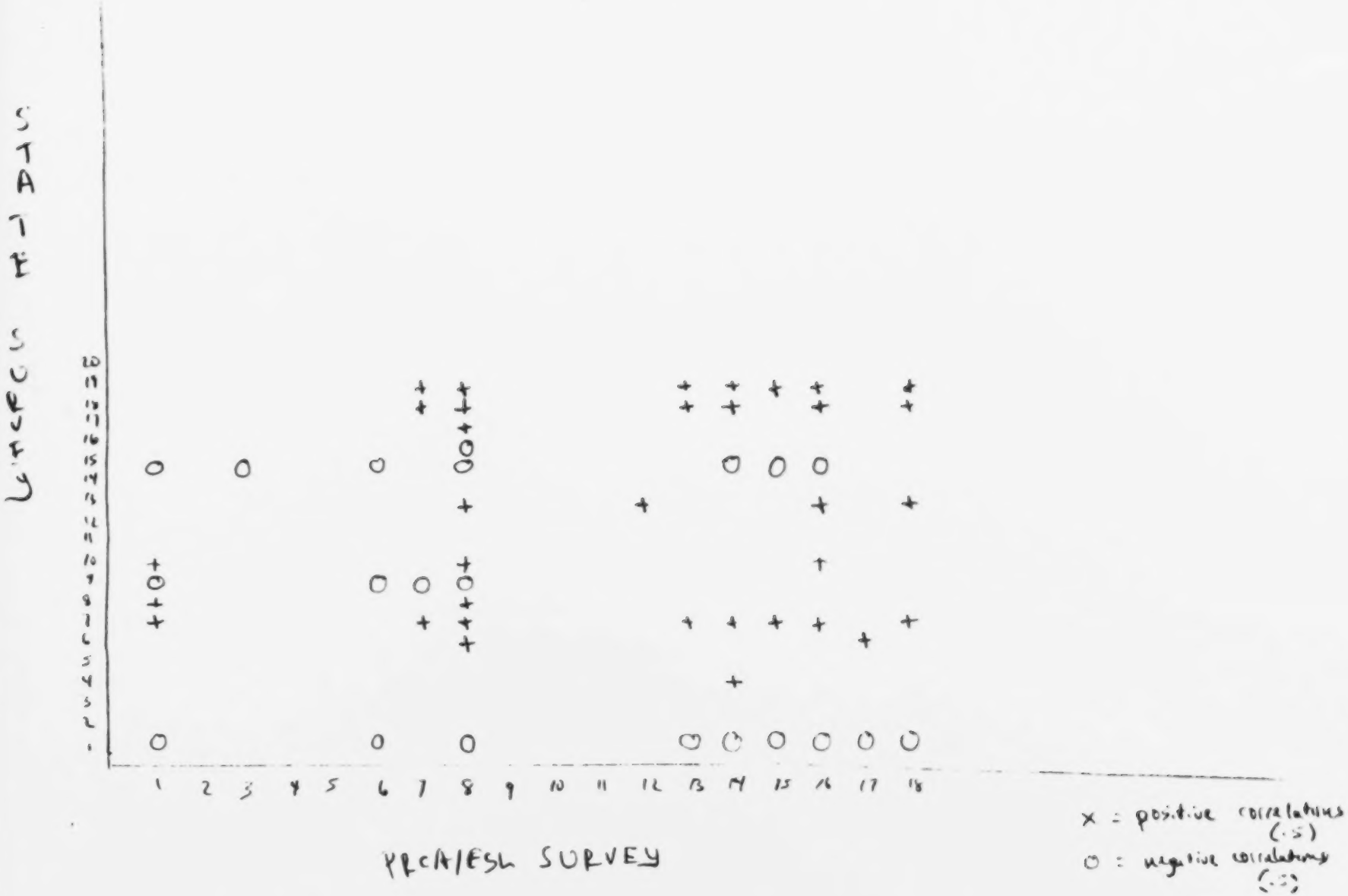
LINEAR TRENDS
PRE/POST SURVEY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
× = positive correlations (.5)
○ = negative correlations (.5)

Table 5

PRCA-PRCA/ESL FACTORS

Factor 1 Bipolar tension/relaxation response
Eigenvalue 8.2, 30% variance

I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English.
Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous when speaking English.
Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.
I have no fear of speaking in English class.
I feel relaxed when speaking in English class.
My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am speaking in English class.
I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.

Factor 2 Communication Apprehension towards Speaking English to Strangers
Eigenvalue 3.6, 14% variance

Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous.
When speaking to a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.

Factor 3 Shyness
Eigenvalue 2.5, 9% variance

I am afraid to speak up in conversations

Factor 4 Low Communication Apprehension in Public Speaking
Eigenvalue 1.8, 9% variance

I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public.

Factor 5 Low Communication Apprehension
Eigenvalue 1.4, 5% variance

I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most people are.

Factor 6 High Communication Apprehension in Groups
Eigenvalue 1.2, 4.2% variance

I am afraid to express myself in a group.

Factor 7 High Communcation Apprehension in Speaking English
Eigenvalue 1.1, 4.1% variance

I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English

Factor 8 High Communication Apprehension in Self-Expressive Contacts
Eigenvalue 1.1, 3.9% variance

I dislike using my body and voice expressively.

Table 6

PRCA-STATE FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor 1 — Bipolar Tension/Relaxation
Eigenvalue 11.5, 38% variance

relaxed
nervous
frightened
embarassed
calm
tense

Factor 2 — Physical Discomfort
Eigenvalue 3.8, 13% variance

tired
uneasy

Factor 3 — Social Isolate Indicators
Eigenvalue 2.1, 7% variance

I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most people are.
I am afraid to speak up in conversations.

Factor 4 — Low Communication Apprehension in Groups
Eigenvalue 2, 7% variance

I look forward to expressing myself in meetings.
I like to get involved in group discussions.

Factor 5 — High Negativity Towards Speaking English
Eigenvalue 1.6, 5% variance

angry
horrified

Factor 6 — Friendliness
Eigenvalue 1.4, 5% variance

friendly atmosphere

Factor 7 — Certainty
Eigenvalue 1.2, 4% variance

decisive

Factor 8 — High Communication Apprehension in Self-Expressive Environment
Eigenvalue 1.2, 4% variance

I dislike using my body and voice expressively.

Table 7

PRCA/ESL-STATE FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor 1 Tension
Eigenvalue 14.7, variance 39%

nervous
frightened
embarassed
uncertain
tense

Factor 2 Bipolar Tension/Relaxation
Eigenvalue 4.4, variance 12%

I am tense and nervous when talking to people in English.
Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous while speaking English.
Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.
I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.

Factor 3 Physical Discomfort
Eigenvalue 2.2, variance 7%

tired
uneasy

Factor 4 Confidence
Eigenvalue 2.2, variance 6%

confident
decisive

Factor 5 Tension When Speaking to Strangers in English
Eigenvalue 2.1, variance 6%

Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous.
When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.

Factor 6 High Negativity
Eigenvalue 1.7, variance 5%

angry
horrified

Factor 7 Low Communication Apprehension When Speaking English in Groups
Eigenvalue 1.4, variance 4%

I like to get involved in group discussions in English.
Generally, I am comfortable while talking in English with groups of people.

Factor 8 Friendliness
Eigenvalue 1.1, variance 4%

Friendly atmosphere

Factor 9 Relaxation When Speaking English With Strangers
Eigenvalue 1.1, variance 3%

When speaking English with a stranger, I feel very relaxed.

Table 8

PRCA Survey

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I look forward to expressing myself in meetings.	0	2	8	2	4	
	1	3	3	5	2	
	2	1	5	2	4	1
2. I am afraid to express myself in a group.	0		3	7	4	2
	1			5	6	2
	2		3	1	7	2
3. I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public.	0		3	7	4	2
	1		1	7	4	1
	2		4	3	5	1
4. Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform.	0	2	4	5	4	1
	1			5	7	1
	2		2	2	8	2
5. I always avoid speaking in public.	0	1	2	5	6	2
	1		2	4	6	1
	2	2	2	4	5	
6. I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most people are.	0		3	7	5	1
	1	1	1	5	4	2
	2		3	7	3	
7. I like to get involved in group discussion.	0	3	5	8		
	1	1	5	5	1	
	2	3	6	2	2	
8. I dislike using my body and voice expressively.	0	4	4	2	5	1
	1	1	3	3	4	2
	2	1	2		9	1
9. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.	0		2	2	8	4
	1			1	4	8
	2			2	6	5
10. I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local TV show.	0		1	8	5	2
	1		1	8	2	2
	2	1	2	6	3	1

Table 9

PRCA/ESL Survey

	Strongly Agree		Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I dislike talking in English with groups of people.	0	1	4	10	2	
	1		1	8	3	1
	2		4	3	6	
2. Generally, I am comfortable while talking in English with groups of people.	0		8	3	6	
	1		4	5	4	
	2	1	6		5	1
3. I am tense and nervous while talking to people in English.	0	3	7	4	3	
	1	1	4	2	6	
	2	1	2	3	5	2
4. I like to get involved in group discussions in English.	0	1	6	3	7	
	1		2	8	2	1
	2	1	3	6	3	
5. Talking to strangers in English makes me tense and nervous.	0	2	8	3	3	1
	1	1	4	4	3	1
	2	1	4	2	5	1
6. I am calm and relaxed when talking with groups of people in English.	0		3	3	9	1
	1		2	3	7	1
	2		6	3	3	1
7. When speaking with a stranger in English, I feel very nervous.	0	3	5	5	3	1
	1		4	3	4	2
	2	1	1	2	6	3
8. I have no fear of speaking in English.	0		5	9	2	1
	1		4	7	2	
	2	2	8	2	1	
9. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous when speaking English.	0	2	6	5	4	
	1	1	4	1	6	1
	2		1	4	7	1
10. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed when speaking English.	0		2	3	11	1
	1		3	4	5	1
	2	2	5	1	5	
11. When speaking English with a stranger, I feel very relaxed.	0	1	1	5	9	1
	1		2	5	4	2
	2		6	1	5	1
12. I am afraid to speak up in conversations in English.	0	3	5	5	3	1
	1		6	2	4	1
	2			5	6	2
13. I have no fear of speaking in English class.	0		5	6	6	
	1		5	4	3	1
	2	4	5	1	3	

PRC A/ESL Survey

	Strongly Agree		Agree	No Opinion (3)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I feel physically uncomfortable when speaking in English class.	0		7	1	7	2
	1	1	2	2	5	2
	2		3	1	5	4
15. I feel relaxed when speaking in English class.	0		2	5	8	2
	1		3	4	3	3
	2	2	4	3	4	
16. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am speaking in English class.	0	3	6	5	3	
	1	1	3	2	6	1
	2			4	6	3
17. I face the prospect of speaking in English class with confidence.	0		2	6	5	4
	1		1	8	2	2
	2	1	4	5	2	1
18. While speaking English in class, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	0	3	7	2	5	
	1	2	2	2	5	2
	2				8	5

Table 10

State Survey

	Strongly Agree			Agree			No Opinion (3)			Disagree			Strongly Disagree		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
1. Relaxed	2	4	7	7	4	6	6	3		2	2				
2. Angry	1	1								3	3		13	8	12
3. Confident	1	1	2	3	3	8	9	7	2	3	1	1	1		
4. Nervous	1	1		3	1	1	4		1	6	8	5	3	2	5
5. Happy			3	4	5	6	11	6	2	2	1	1		1	
6. Tired							3			8	7	3	6	5	9
7. Frightened	2			2	3		3		1	5	7	4	5	2	8
8. Uneasy				2			3	1		8	6	3	4	5	10
9. Energetic	1			1	2	7	6	5	5	7	3	1	1	2	
10. Embarassed	1	1		3	1		6	2	1	4	6	5	7	2	6
11. Cheerful	1	1	3	4	8	10	10	1		2	2			1	
12. Decisive	1	1		3	3	5	5	6	5	7	1	2	1	1	
13. Awkward	1			4	1		4	1		6	7	5	2	3	7
14. Friendly Atmosphere	6	3	11	9	8	2	1	2					1		
15. Calm	1	1	7	6	8	3	7	2	2	3	2				
16. Entertained	2	3	10	6	6	3	8	4		1					
17. Sweating and Shaking								3	3	4	4	2	9	5	11
18. Uncertain					4	3	7	1	1	3	6	5	3	2	7
19. Tense				5	4		4	1	2	5	5	4	3	2	7
20. Horrified							2			6	6	1	5	6	12

Note: 16% of the subjects did not appear for the interview, so totals do not equal 100%.